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DE RUEHBO #0449/01 0231348
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
O 231348Z JAN 07
FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2160
INFO RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 7352
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 8590
RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ JAN LIMA 4654
RUEHZP/AMEMBASSY PANAMA 9895
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO 5308
RUEHGL/AMCONSUL GUAYAQUIL 3837
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RUEAWJC/DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHDC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RHEHOND/DIRONDCP WASHDC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC

UNCLAS BOGOTA 000449

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E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [KJUS](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [CO](#)
SUBJECT: SALVATORE MANCUSO BEGINS TO REVEAL CRIMES; VERSION
LIBRE TO BE TELEVISED

REF: A. BOGOTA 269
[B](#). BOGOTA 408
[C](#). 06 BOGOTA 10976

Summary

[1](#)1. (U) Ex-AUC leader Salvatore Mancuso admitted to committing or ordering 336 murders from the early 1990s to 2003 in his January 15-16 voluntary confession, or version libre, in Medellin. He discussed paramilitary infiltration of government institutions and paramilitary interference in local and national elections, and handed over the July 2001 "Ralito Agreement" signed by paramilitary leaders and some 30 political figures. Mancuso is scheduled to resume his version libre on January 25, but delays could result following Prosecutor General Mario Iguaran's January 18 announcement that the version libre process would now be televised. End summary.

First Day Details of Round Two

[1](#)2. (U) Mancuso described 90 operations in which he personally killed or ordered killed a total of 336 people from the early 1990s to 2003. He mentioned 30 "confrontations" with the guerillas from 1992-1997. Mancuso said he served as a "guide" for the military before joining the AUC in 1995. After entering the AUC, Mancuso said that he or Castano was provided "intelligence," usually by the military or police, on guerillas or their sympathizers. When the AUC captured guerillas or sympathizers, they "talked" to them to convince them to work with the AUC and then "disposed" of these persons. He named some victims, but for many of the operations he did not have names.

[1](#)3. (U) Of the 30 "confrontations," Mancuso described two notorious massacres, El Aro and Mapiripan, as standard military operations against the guerrillas. He said Castano ordered him to participate in the massacre at El Aro (1997), in which 15 people were killed. Mancuso claimed to have assisted the operations, supplying ammunition via helicopter and then evacuating wounded paramilitary combatants. He did

not mention any additional personal involvement, describing the massacre as a military operation carried out with the assistance of now deceased General Alfonso Monosalva, commander of Colombian Army Fourth Brigade. Mancuso referred to Mapiripan (July 1997), in which some 30 people were killed, but provided few details. He said only that he had received collaboration from Colonel Lino Sanchez, who has been sentenced for his involvement. Mancuso promised more information on Mapiripan.

¶4. (U) Turning to the AUC as an organization, he said Carlos Castano created it to negotiate with the GOC, and the commanders of the blocs had autonomy. Still, when pressed, Mancuso said Castano was his commander and that he (Mancuso) led a number of blocs. He said the blocs were set up like any other military unit: the AUC had regulations, "like any business would have." AUC commanders attended six-month training schools, at which active duty Colombian military personnel served as trainers. In addition, they had strategies for carrying out operations and collecting intelligence. Mancuso asserted the FARC had infiltrated the government, the police, the fiscalia, NGOs, and civil society, and therefore the AUC decided to do the same.

¶5. (U) Mancuso said he demobilized with Catatumbo Bloc, instead of the Cordoba Bloc to which he devoted most of his time, to be one of the first commanders to demobilize and to encourage others to do the same. He claimed he was the "State" in Cordoba, Norte de Santander, and Magdalena departments from 1995 until his demobilization in 2004. He claimed he administered justice, affected economic and political relationships, and even influenced religion.

Mancuso stated he had politicians visit him to determine if they merited his support.

¶6. (U) Mancuso told prosecutors the 1998 presidential election was the only time when the AUC "at gunpoint" told voters how to vote -) for Liberal Horacio Serpa in the first round and for successful Conservative Andres Pastrana in the second. He affirmed several times, however, that in the case of President Uribe, what they had done had been to "recommend" that people vote for him. He also denied any financial backing or use of coercion in favor of any particular candidate for the congressional elections of 2002. Mancuso also revealed the list of political figures who met with the AUC in July 2001; Senator Miguel de La Espriella was the first to disclose the contents of this meeting in late November 2006, but neither the document nor the list of signatories had been known (refs B and C).

¶7. (U) At the end of the session, the representative of the Inspector General's Office (Procuraduria), who has been present throughout the version libre, gave Mancuso a list of the disappeared, presented by the Madres de la Candelaria (a victims group that has gathered outside the courthouse for each of the version libre sessions) and requested that he provide information on these individuals. He was also provided a series of questions collected from the victims who had attended the version libre (roughly 50, viewing via close circuit TV in the same building but on a separate floor).

Second Day Details of Round Two

¶8. (U) On day two, Mancuso began the session stating he had reviewed the list of 200 disappeared persons and only three had disappeared in zones under his control. He said he had shared the list with the other ex-paramilitaries at Itagui for their review. Mancuso then continued listing his "military anti-subversive" activities, at times naming victims. He always claimed his operations had Carlos Castano's "blessings" and were based on "military intelligence." Most of the persons he said had participated in operations were dead or missing, although he mentioned the involvement of paramilitary leader Rodrigo Tovar Pupo, (AKA "Jorge 40") on numerous occasions, in addition to other

commanders under his control.

¶9. (U) Mancuso told how the AUC became concerned about ties between the guerrillas and indigenous groups and university professors. Terrorists had recruited some indigenous groups to help them communicate by using their dialect to prevent the AUC from intercepting communications. In response, the AUC developed its own group of indigenous sympathizers. Regarding universities, he claimed the University of Cordoba was "infested" with guerilla activity and described the killings of university professors. He said he had played a critical role in removing the president of the university, replaced with a more "friendly" candidate.

¶10. (U) Mancuso said that when the AUC received information that prosecutors and other GOC officials were sympathetic to the guerrillas, he would have them killed. Mancuso described an AUC operation in the guerrilla-controlled area of La Gabarra (1999-2000), Norte de Santander department, in which 95 persons reportedly were killed. He said the guerrillas blended into the population and that civilians may have been killed in the crossfire "but such things happened in an irregular war." To gather more information on the guerrillas, Mancuso said the AUC in the north of the department wired 1 billion pesos (approximately USD 450,000) per month to the police, army, DAS, Fiscalia and other government institutions. He cited section prosecutor chief for Cucuta Ana Maria Florez, who is currently a fugitive, as an AUC informant who provided information on prosecutors who were FARC and ELN sympathizers.

¶11. (U) Mancuso's revelations were less detailed as he approached 2004. He mentioned a 15-day operation in the Montes de Maria in 2000, in which the AUC "had no choice" but to attack the civilian population to get to the guerillas. In reference to the El Salado (2000) and Chengue massacres (2001) "if anything happened in these areas, Marine General Rodrigo Quinonez was their contact." (Note: Quinonez was investigated and absolved for his participation in these massacres by former Prosecutor General Luis Camilo Osorio. Osorio has repeatedly been accused of ties to the paramilitaries.) Mancuso admitted to ordering the 2001 killing of Hector Acosta, the Mayor of Tierralta, Cordoba department, because he had allegedly diverted public funds to the guerrillas. He also mentioned having a candidate for Mayor of Cucuta killed in 2003. Prior to the peace talks with the GOC, Mancuso said the AUC had grown at a rapid rate, undermining internal controls and leading to the excessive use of force by some members. He said he reprimanded subordinates after particularly violent operations. It was the AUC's "exponential" growth and lack of control which led him and other commanders to decide to turnover their guns and negotiate peace with the GOC.

¶12. (U) Once Mancuso finished his presentation, the prosecutor called for the version libre to be suspended until January 25 to prepare for the next topic, in which Mancuso would have to address narcotrafficking, assets, and paramilitary finances. It will not be until after he addresses his and the AUC's finances that the ex-paramilitary would have to address specific questions on the 90 incidents/crimes he confessed to in the previous round. The Fiscalia would also have to properly inform the victims and arrange for their participation in the process. Neither the victims nor the general public are aware of the different stages of the version libre, which is creating confusion and unrealistic expectations.

Press and Victims' Reactions

¶13. (SBU) The press has been reporting how chilling it was to hear the matter of fact manner in which Mancuso confessed about torturing and execution of people, as if he were a corporate executive reporting on his business. In addition, Mancuso's revelation of the names of political figures who

had signed the July 2001 "Ralito Agreement" has received extensive press coverage. Moreover, several victims groups have rejected Mancuso's version libre because they feel he is not telling the whole truth. One victim, for example, told a reporter that Mancuso "seemed proud of what they'd done, not remorseful." Medellin's Reparation and Reconciliation Commission's coordinator Gerardo Vega told us on January 17 that the "unknown" of this process was still the "dealings" with victims. He has had to fight with some NGOs that have been discouraging victims to participate in the Justice and Peace process and instead encouraging them to take their cases to the International Court of Justice.

Version Libre to be Televised

¶14. (SBU) As a result of a Constitutional Court ruling and significant pressure from victims, NGOs, media and some GOC officials, Prosecutor General Mario Iguaran, with the support of the Ministry of Interior and Justice and the Supreme Court, announced on January 18 that version libres would be broadcast on national television and radio. Arrangements were in place for victims' families to view via closed circuit television, but some NGOs complained they were not allowed access to the feed. While a transparent measure, live public broadcasting could expose victims or witnesses who wish to remain anonymous, and thereby complicate the Fiscalía's ability to build cases.

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